United Nations E/2008/79

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
12 June 2008

Original: English

Substantive session of 2008
New York, 30 June-25 July 2008
Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda*
High-level segment: annual ministerial review

Letter dated 4 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the national report of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which was prepared for the national voluntary presentation of Kazakhstan, to be held during the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 3 July 2008 (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Economic and Social Council, under item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda.

(*Signed*) Byrganym **Aitimova**
Permanent Representative

* E/2008/100.

08-38121 (E) 130608 300608

Annex to the letter dated 4 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

[Original: Russian]

National report on the achievement of Kazakhstan's strategic priorities to 2030 in the light of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

Astana — 2008

List of abbreviations

1.	TSA	Targeted social assistance
2.	OE	Office for Emergencies
3.	GDP	Gross domestic product
4.	GPS	Global positioning systems
5.	UNT	Uniform national testing
6.	EU	European Union
7.	CWR	Committee on water resources
8.	LA	Local announcements
9.	SUS	School under strength
10.	ME	Ministry of the Environment
11.	ILO	International Labour Organization
12.	IFSAS	International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea
13.	NGO	Non-governmental organization
14.	EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
15.	UN	United Nations
16.	SPNT	Specially Protected National Territories
17.	ODA	Official Development Assistance
18.	ODS	Ozone depleting substances
19.	GG	Greenhouse gases
20.	PSI	Periodic State inspection
21.	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
22.	CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
23.	AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
24.	Strategy-2030	Long-term development strategy "Kazakhstan — 2030. Prosperity, security and improved living standards for all Kazakhs"
25.	TACIS	Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States
26.	MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
27.	ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
28.	UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
29.	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

30.	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
31.	UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
32.	UNPFA	United Nations Population Fund
33.	USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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"Improving living standards for the people of Kazakhstan is the principal aim of Government policy"

Message from the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, February 2008

Introduction

Priorities of the national strategy and the Millennium Development Goals

The strategic development priorities of the Republic of Kazakhstan are to improve the quality of life for the population by reducing social exclusion and raising the quality of social services, improving the environment, involving civil society in development and strengthening national identity.

The long-term development strategy "Kazakhstan-2030. Prosperity, security and improved living standards for all Kazakhs" was adopted in 1997. It identified 7 priorities for the country's development.

- Priority 1: National security
- Priority 2: Domestic stability and social cohesion
- Priority 3: Economic growth
- Priority 4: Health, education and welfare for the citizens of Kazakhstan
- Priority 5: Energy resources
- Priority 6: Infrastructure, transport and communications
- Priority 7: A professional State

Since 1998 all the programmes adopted in the country are being developed in accordance with the Development Strategy for Kazakhstan to the year 2030. The following have been adopted in the light of the Strategy:

- A strategy for industrial development and innovation to 2015 (2003);
- A plan for environmental security for the Republic of Kazakhstan to 2015 (2003);
- A strategy for gender equality in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2006-2016 (2005);
- A strategy to place Kazakhstan among the 50 most competitive countries in the world (2006);
- A strategy for territorial development in the Republic of Kazakhstan to the year 2015;
- A plan for the transition of the Republic of Kazakhstan to sustainable development over the period 2007-2024 (2006);
- A programme to combat poverty and unemployment in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2000-2002;

- The State programme for poverty reduction, 2000-2005;
- The State programme for reforming and developing the health system in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2005-2010;
- The State programme for educational development in Kazakhstan, 2005-2010;
- The programme "Developing agricultural land", 2004-2010;
- The programme «Drinking water supplies», 2002-2010;
- The programme for environmental protection, 2004-2007;
- The programme for environmental protection, 2008-2010;
- The programme to combat desertification, 2005-2015;
- The HIV/AIDS control programme in the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2001-2005;
- The comprehensive programme to tackle the problems of the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing site, 2005-2007.

The chief priority in all the programmes which have been adopted is to raise living standards for present and future generations of Kazakhs, on the basis of qualitative improvements in development. The long-term strategic development of Kazakhstan is closely linked to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). All the goals and targets of the MDGs are reflected in the above national and sectoral development programmes; measures to achieve some of them have already been put in place, and measures to achieve other MDGs are presently continuing.

Progress in implementing the National Development Strategy and the policies being followed

The country has the potential to achieve these priorities, together with the necessary conditions for doing so.

Above all, domestic stability and social cohesion, together with a multi-dimensional natural resource potential and reforms over the past 10 years have brought about high rates of economic growth.

Over the past decade, gross domestic product has risen from US$ 22 to US$ 104.1 billion, and GDP per head of population has increased 4.6 times to US$ 6,700, on a par with the indicators of a number of States in Central and Eastern Europe.

Thanks to the creation of a favourable climate for investment, considerable volumes of investment have been attracted into the country's economy. The volume of direct foreign investment in the Kazakh economy from 1993 to 2007 reached US$ 62.1 billion, representing 80 per cent of all outside investment in Central Asia. The country's international assets, taking account of National Fund resources, are in excess of US$ 38.6 billion. The volume of annual external trade increased more than sixfold over the decade, and is now around US$ 80.5 billion. Banking and insurance sectors and a contributory pension scheme have all been set up according to market principles. In the opinion of the international rating agencies, the Republic has successfully completed the transitional stage of economic development, and now has sufficient potential for future economic growth.

According to the World Bank classification, Kazakhstan is among the group of countries at average income level. In 10 years the incomes of Kazakh citizens have risen 6.5 times, earnings have quintupled, pensions have quadrupled and targeted State social assistance has markedly increased.

There are plans to build 150 health facilities and 300 rural dispensaries in the near future, along with a regional network of rehabilitation centres for adult and child invalids in line with international standards. Since 1998 the Presidential programme "Bolashak" has been in operation countrywide, providing tuition for talented young people in the world's best universities. In the coming years 250 new schools and 50 vocational technical colleges are to be built.

The Republic now has the necessary political will and the resources to drive forward the social aspects of progress and transform its economic achievements so as to achieve equitable development of its human potential, while improving living standards and increasing opportunities for its citizens. The country has already achieved some of the agreed development goals, and has attained significant progress in achieving others, including poverty reduction, access to education and progress in women's rights. However, in health, education and economic sustainability there are still problems calling for additional efforts on the part of the State and civil society.

Part A
Implementing the National Development Strategy

Eliminating extreme poverty and hunger

Of special importance for the reduction of poverty in Kazakhstan is the long-term development strategy "Kazakhstan — 2030. Prosperity, security, and improved living standards for all Kazakhs" and the Government programmes for combating poverty (2000-2001) and reducing poverty (2002-2005). Since 2002 the law "On targeted State social assistance" (referred to below as the "Law") has been in effect. Under this law low-income families are paid a targeted form of social assistance for each family member (hereinafter — TSA) to meet the difference between average income per head and the official poverty threshold (40 per cent of subsistence income).

As a result of implementing the Law and the programme measures for reducing poverty:

- A database on low-income families has been set up, together with an automated system for selecting TSA beneficiaries;[4]
- A range of methods of reducing poverty has been identified and put into use, combining active methods (creating jobs, vocational training and retraining, public works) and passive ones (increasing wages, pensions and social benefits).
- The number of poor people with average incomes below the poverty threshold has been reduced to less than one fifth (there were 224,800 people in receipt of TSA on 1 January 2008) and this has made it possible to reduce expenditure on the payment of TSA by 3.6 times.

According to the 2005 national report on the attainment of the MDGs, in 2004 Kazakhstan had already achieved the target of reducing by half the proportion of people living on an income below subsistence level. Thus one of the principal development goals of the millennium — eliminating extreme poverty and hunger — has been met.

The theory and practice of social assistance are continuing to develop, taking account of the experience and recommendations of international institutions.

Kazakhstan is taking steps to improve its system of targeted social assistance by introducing measures to motivate unemployed citizens in receipt of TSA to train for a new job, retrain or look for work.

As a result of the reforms carried out in the social sphere, a mixed system of social protection has been created, including State support, pension fund provision and social security and insurance.

A basic pension was introduced in 2005. This is a guaranteed minimum payment for all those reaching pension age, irrespective of their entitlement to a State or contributory scheme pension.

Official social indicators are on the rise. Since 2006, in line with the recommendations of international experts at UNDP and ILO, improvements have been made to the method of calculating the minimum level of subsistence — the relative proportions of food and non-food items in the consumer basket have been brought closer to actual expenditure by the low-income groups in the population, and the range of food items purchased has more than doubled, resulting in a 25 per cent increase in the minimum subsistence level.

The law provides for the basic social norm to be applied in establishing the minimum subsistence level. This norm is used to determine minimum monthly earnings, basic social benefits and the poverty threshold. This basic indicator has the advantage of making it possible to compare levels of social benefits with the minimum subsistence level.

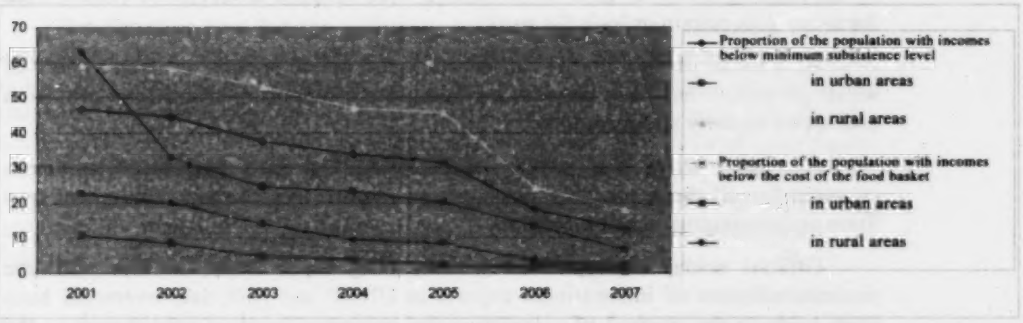
Since 2008 the basic pension has been set at 40 per cent of the minimum subsistence level. Pensions are continuing to increase. In the first months of 2008, average pension payments increased by 29 per cent above the basic pension.

The social support system for families with children has continued to develop. In 2006, in addition to the single payment made on the birth of a child (payable since 2003), the following benefits have been introduced: a payment for caring for a child of up to one year old, the amount of which varies depending on the number of children in the family (from one to four or more) and a payment for children up to the age of 18 in low-income families whose income is below the cost of the standard food basket.

Since January 2008 the rates of benefit paid on the birth of a child and for caring for a child have increased by 2 and 1.6 times respectively. In 2010-2011 a further staged increase is planned in the 2007 benefit rates: payments for those looking after a child will rise on average by 2.5, and those for the birth of a fourth or subsequent child will more than quadruple. Social insurance has already been introduced for pregnancy, childbirth and childcare.

Work is continuing to improve the method of calculating the minimum subsistence level. The measures being taken to raise the living standards of the population have cut poverty levels by 1.7 in 2006 by comparison with 2005 (to 18.2 per cent), and the figures for 2007 indicate that poverty levels have fallen to 12.7 per cent (diagram 1). The Gini coefficient fell from 0.332 in 1999 to 0.309 in 2007.

Diagram 1
Evolution of living standards, 2001-2007



Source: Statistics Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Nevertheless, according to the 2007 figures, 1.4 per cent of the population had incomes below the poverty threshold. Families with children were the worst off. Among recipients of TSA, children account for 61.2 per cent and those looking after children, 13.2 per cent. The unemployed, at 11.7 per cent, are another numerous group.

In recent years income inequality in the population has decreased, but this is still a problem and continuing effort is needed to reduce it further.

Regional disparities in poverty levels

There are regional differences in poverty. The largest proportions of poor people are found in the Qyzylorda (37.5 per cent) and Mangghystau (26.5 per cent) regions. The capital of the Republic, Astana, is relatively well off at 5.5 per cent, and so are Pavlodar region (12 per cent) and the city of Almaty (12.1 per cent). These are the regions with the lowest poverty rates. Even with the fall in the percentages of poor people in urban locations (from 20.2 per cent to 13.6 per cent) and in rural areas (from 45.6 per cent to 24.4 per cent), poverty remains largely concentrated among rural inhabitants.

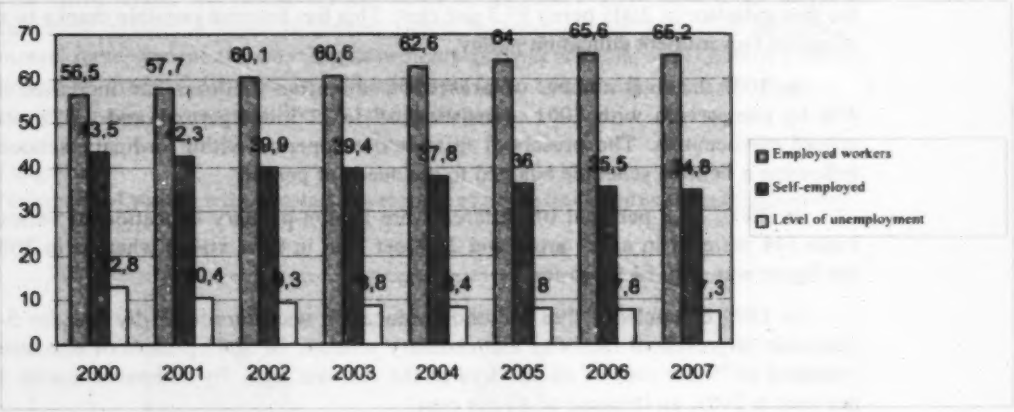
In recent years the gap has been somewhat reduced: in 2004 rural poverty rates were 3 times higher than those in cities,[1] at 24.8 per cent and 9.2 per cent respectively, whereas in 2006 rural poverty rates were 1.8 times in excess of urban rates, at 24.4 per cent against 13.6 per cent. This "flattening out" of rural and urban poverty is largely explained by the rise in migration from rural to urban areas. At the same time, migratory flows from village to city lead to an increase in urban poverty.

[1] Development goals in Kazakhstan on the threshold of the new millennium, 2005.

Poverty and employment

Thanks to the measures taken by the Government of Kazakhstan since 1999, there is now a steady increase in the numbers of employed people in the population, and a reduction in the level of unemployment. Employment stood at 7.6 million in 2007, an increase of 1.5 million (19.7 per cent) since 1999. One of the factors affecting the labour market is unemployment. Levels of unemployment have been falling year by year. In 2007 unemployment stood at 7.3 per cent, which was 6.2 percentage points lower than in 1999 (13.5 per cent). The unemployed population was 597,200 in 2007, a drop of 37.1 per cent over 8 years.

Diagram 2
Employment trends, 2000-2007



To solve the problem of unemployment in the Republic, and with a view to actively searching and selecting job opportunities (vacancies), a standard automated job placement system has been introduced in all regions. A plan for 2008-2010, consisting of measures to improve the job placement system, is now in effect. Implementation of these measures over the period 2008-2010 is expected to reduce unemployment to 6.9 per cent by the end of 2010.

Although the scale of youth unemployment (those aged 15-24) is still considerable, it is falling: from 14.3 per cent in 2004 to 9.4 per cent in 2007.

On the labour market there has been a reduction in the numbers of self-employed people in 2007 by comparison with 1999, which fell by 93,600, i.e. by 34.8 per cent. Self-employment is more frequent among women: in rural areas 57.5 per cent of women and 51.7 per cent of men are self-employed, whereas in cities the percentages are 21.6 per cent and 20.1 per cent.

The Government of Kazakhstan is working to raise the level of economic activity among women; at present it is 10 per cent lower than among men. Steps are also being taken to solve the problem of youth unemployment.

Achieving universal primary education

In Kazakhstan, in accordance with the law "On education" and the State programme for developing education in the Republic of Kazakhstan over the years 2005-2010, a set of measures announced in annual messages by the Head of State to the people of Kazakhstan is being pursued to develop the education system, make it accessible and improve the quality of education services.

Access to education

Primary education, as part of a system of continuing education, is the foundation stone of an individual's future development.

Kazakhstan has succeeded in providing a primary education for all children. In 2007, 99.6 per cent of primary school-age children were in education, the minimum for this indicator in 2005 being 99.3 per cent. This has become possible thanks to an effective Government education policy.

In 2007 the total number of **preschool education** facilities had increased by 450 by comparison with 2001, consisting of 1,617 kindergartens and 1,427 pre-school mini-centres. The preschool mini-centres operate within ordinary schools, following a flexible schedule adapted to the needs of parents.

In 2007, 32.8 per cent of children were in non-primary education of various kinds (44 per cent in urban areas and 20.1 per cent in rural areas) whereas in 2001 the figure was only 14.9 per cent.

In 1999 compulsory free preschool education was introduced by law for 5-6 year-olds in preschool facilities and ordinary schools. In 2007 preschool education extended to 79 per cent of all children of the relevant ages, by comparison with 31 per cent in 2001, an increase of 48 per cent.

Under article 30 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, citizens are guaranteed free general education in State schools. General education is compulsory.

General education comprises three levels:

- Primary education — classes 1-4 (from ages 6-7);
- Basic secondary education — classes 5-9;
- General secondary education — classes 10-11.

In 2007, total pupil numbers in classes 1-4 were **938,100** (36.4 per cent of the total number of students), and in 2001, **1,141,655** (38.2 per cent).

Schools under strength (SUS)

Because of the special geographic and demographic characteristics of Kazakhstan — the huge area and low population density of the Republic — there are "schools under strength", that is, schools with a small number of pupils.

In 2007, 55.4 per cent of all general education schools were SUS schools, and 96.4 per cent of these schools were in rural areas. They were educating 16.2 per cent of all pupils, and 94.9 per cent of pupils in rural areas.

The pattern of evolution of the network of SUS schools shows that their number is increasing. From 2001 to 2007, the number went up by 177, and the number of pupils in them rose by 19,600.

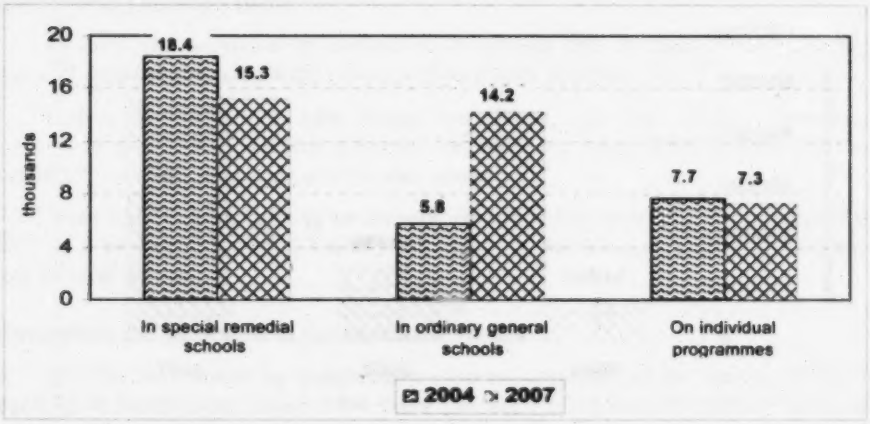
Thanks to the Government policy of securing the right of all children to education and access to education, these schools are fully functional in spite of the high cost of running them.

Schools for children with limited development potential

To ensure that education is accessible for children with limited development potential, **special remedial education facilities** have been set up.

In 2007, 14,500 children with developmental disabilities were being educated in special groupings of ordinary kindergartens, and 15,300 in 100 remedial schools. The Government has taken certain steps to introduce and develop an inclusive education system. **Fifteen thousand** pupils in need of help with their physical or mental development are studying in ordinary general schools, and **7,300** of them are in special classes (diagram 3). Arrangements have been made for 7,300 children to study at home following individual programmes.

Diagram 3
Numbers of pupils with limited development potential in education (thousands)



Education facilities for children and adolescents in need of special education

Children with deviant patterns of behaviour are educated in special schools. In 2007 there were 9 of these, catering for 724 pupils. There is a downward trend year by year in the numbers of these schools and the children in them.

Language of instruction

One of the indicators of wide access to education is the opportunity to choose the language of instruction. Education in the Republic is provided in 5 languages: Kazakh, Russian, Uyghur, Uzbek and Tajik.

In 2007, 47.6 per cent of all general schools were teaching in the Kazakh language, 22.9 per cent in Russian, 26.6 per cent in both Kazakh and Russian, and 1.1 per cent in other languages.

In locations where there is a sizeable population of specific ethnic groups, schools teach in the Uzbek, Uyghur and Tajik languages. Some 77.6 per cent of Uzbeks, 50.6 per cent of Tajiks and 35.6 per cent of Uyghurs are studying in their own languages.

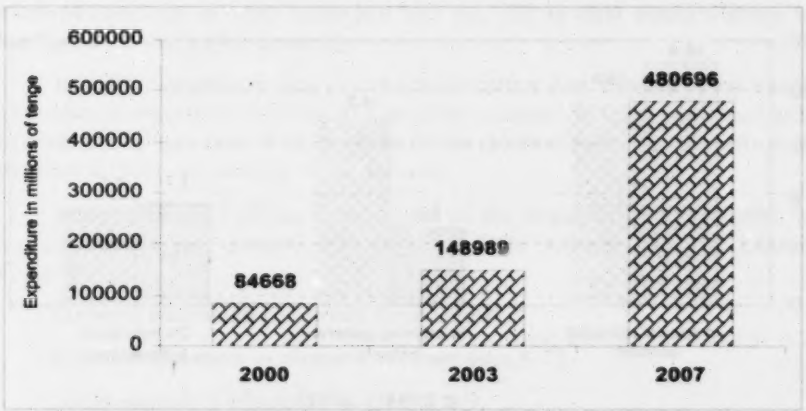
In 2007, teaching in 30 schools was in three languages: Kazakh, Russian and English.

Financing the education system

To create the conditions in which accessible high-standard education is provided and expand the network of educational institutions and improve their facilities, the Government is implementing an effective policy to increase substantially, year by year, the funding available for the education system.

With the rise in the country's level of economic development, expenditure on education from the State budget has increased almost sixfold (diagram 4).

Diagram 4
Expenditure from the State budget on education, in millions of tenge



The proportion of GDP devoted to State spending on education in 2007 was 3.6 per cent, against 3.3 per cent in 2000. A considerable portion (60.5 per cent) of total budget expenditure on education is allocated to general education, with 4.5 per cent of total spending being allocated to preschool education.

In Kazakhstan there is also a steady growth in total expenditure per pupil at every level. In 2007 spending on each preschool pupil increased 3.6 times by comparison with 2000, and spending on each general education pupil 4.7 times.

Quality of education

The education development programme adopted in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2004 for the years 2005-2010 set out the basic guidelines for modernizing the education system in the country, improving education infrastructure and pedagogy,

introducing information technology into schools, improving the teaching force, and so forth. Improvements in the syllabus are designed to develop the motivation and ability of learners to obtain and use knowledge independently in practice, and to enable them through focused and systematic teaching to acquire scientific, effective learning tools.

In order to ensure that education is geared to developing in children the skills they need in life, a subject taught in primary schools is "Learning about the world". This is an integrated course, consisting of three units: nature, human beings, society. In studying this subject, primary pupils acquire a range of basic life skills to enable them to adapt successfully to conditions in modern society.

The year 2007 saw the completion of the special programme for preparing and publishing textbooks and new-generation educational materials for general schools in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Highly qualified teachers are essential in raising the quality of education. The proportion of primary teachers with higher education stood at 66 per cent in 2007, compared with 36.9 per cent in 2001.

Information technology in education

In 1997 a State programme was adopted to incorporate information technology into the general education system, so as to create a national IT network within the international education space.

In 2007 the provision of computers to schools had reached 1 computer for every 21 pupils, compared with 1 for every 62 pupils in 2001.

Online instruction is now being introduced into the teaching process, comprising a set of 5 subject schemas. In addition, since 2005 schools in the Republic have been acquiring multimedia resources.

Work has been proceeding to connect the education system to the Internet. By 2007 96.6 per cent of general schools had access to the Internet, including 93.5 per cent of rural schools.

Monitoring and appraisal in the education system

In order to conduct an independent external appraisal of the quality of pupil learning in Kazakhstan, since 2004 there has been a scheme of uniform national testing (UNT) of pupils leaving general schools, together with periodic State inspection (PSI) of standards achieved by pupils in classes 4 and 9. The UNT procedure covers at least 80 per cent of school-leavers each year. In 2005 10 per cent (in class 4) and 20 per cent (in class 9) of schools took part in the UNT procedure, and in 2008 the figure will be 50 per cent.

The findings of the PSI process for the attainment of pupils at class 4 level indicate a satisfactory level of learning achievement. On average, pupils leaving primary school have successfully mastered from 60 per cent to 70 per cent of the curriculum, depending on the subject. These results are also borne out by the findings of selective monitoring of the standard of educational attainment by class 4 pupils in mathematics, literacy and life skills, carried out by various voluntary and non-governmental organizations.

Participation in international monitoring studies

In order to be able to compare standards of educational attainment, it is necessary to take part in comparative international monitoring studies (TIMSS, PISA, PIRLS, etc.).

In 2007 Kazakhstan took part, for the first time, in an international comparative research study to evaluate mathematical and scientific literacy among pupils in class 4 (TIMSS-2007). A total of 4,271 class 4 pupils from 150 schools in all regions of the country took part. The findings of the study are expected to appear in July 2008.

In 2009 Kazakhstan will take part in the PISA-2009 international survey to evaluate educational attainment in reading, mathematics and science among 15 year-old pupils in general and vocational schools. In May 2008 a PISA-2009 appraisal was held in 50 schools in the Republic, involving 1,900 pupils.

In 2011 Kazakhstan is planning to conduct an international PIRLS comparative research study.

The findings of these international studies make it possible to compare results and conduct a comparative appraisal of the quality of education in the Republic against the corresponding indicators for other countries, so as to bring the education system up to date where necessary in the context of international developments and trends.

Attaining ecological sustainability

Kazakhstan is gradually solving the ecological problems involved in reducing levels of environmental pollution (over the years 2004-2007); stabilizing the environmental quality indicators and raising ecological standards for use of the environment (2008-2010); improving the quality of the environment and achieving a sound level of sustainable ecological development in society (2011-2015).

While gradually making the transition to sustainable natural resource use, over the period 2004-2006 Kazakhstan climbed from 75th to 70th place in the international rating scale for ecological sustainability. The Republic's plan for transition to sustainable development (2007-2024) sets a goal for further improving the index of ecological sustainability (by 10 per cent in 2012, by 15 per cent in 2018 and by 25 per cent in 2024) on the basis of the targets formulated.

In the light of the above, measures have been developed for making the transition to up-to-date models for the consumption and use of natural resources in a careful manner which reduces the environmental burden and sets limits on the depletion of resources.

In Kazakhstan over 60 per cent of the ecosystems are subject to the processes of desertification, especially in the desert and steppe zone, where land is ploughed and over-grazed. About 75 per cent of the territory of the country is at high risk of ecological destabilization. Moreover, there is considerably less spare land, such as water ecosystems with low levels of anthropogenic impact, than in developed countries. The Caspian Sea and the coastal areas are heavily impacted by man-made factors (flooding of oil-wells, pollution of the sea by river waters, implantation of exogenous species, accidents at oil extraction sites). As part of the implementation

of the regional Convention on the preservation of the marine environment [the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea], draft protocols are being prepared on regional cooperation in combating oil pollution, protecting biodiversity, conducting EIAs in a transboundary context and steadily developing coastal areas while preserving and making rational use of bioresources.

The State allocates considerable resources to the regions with an unfavourable ecological environment, with a view to finding appropriate solutions to their development problems.

Special attention is being focused on the Aral sea. To stabilize the situation in the Aral sea region, the Central Asian countries have devised a regional plan of action, a comprehensive programme for the Aral sea basin and a regional convention to protect the environment of Central Asia. These instruments are designed to tackle the issues involved in transboundary management of the water and land resources and of waste, and in preserving biodiversity.

A programme is in effect to tackle the various problems of the Aral sea region over the period 2007-2009, along with the Syrdarya river control and northern Aral sea project for 2001-2009, financed by the Government of Kazakhstan and the World Bank. Following the construction through this project of the Kok-Aral Dam, completed in August 2005, the water level in the northern Aral sea has risen by three metres, resulting in reduced salinity of the water and a considerable increase in the variety and numbers of marketable freshwater fish, which in turn has revived fishing in the Aral sea.

Since 1997, at the initiative of Kazakhstan, the General Assembly of the United Nations has unanimously adopted the resolution "International cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan". This resolution has drawn the attention of the international community to this problem, and considerable assistance for the rehabilitation of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site is being provided by Japan, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada, USAID and UNDP, together with UNICEF, UNFPA, UNV and so forth.

To improve the ecological, economic and medico-social factors which affect the quality of life in the Semipalatinsk region, a State programme has been in effect over the period 2005-2007 to tackle the problems of the former Semipalatinsk nuclear test site during this period. A new programme cycle for the period 2009-2011 will shortly begin. As a result the quality of life in the region (drinking water supplies, social protection and compensation, employment) has improved.

Biodiversity

Work is being done in the Republic to preserve and reproduce water, forest and fishery resources, plants and animals. There are nature reserves of national and international repute in which only limited economic use is permitted, and a register of sites of ground deposits of special ecological, scientific, cultural and other significance, listed as specially protected national territories (SPNT). A database of forestry and fishing areas, SPNT lands, animals and plants has been created by using GPS technology.

The areas comprising nature reserves and national parks amount to 4.4 per cent of the territory of the Republic, a figure which will be more than doubled to reflect

the targets for sustainable development (4.4 per cent by 2005, 5 per cent by 2009, 8 per cent by 2012, 9 per cent by 2018 and 10 per cent by 2024).

Table 1
Categories, numbers and extent of SPNTs

Categories of SPNTs	*Number of sites*	*Area in thousands of hectares*
Nature sanctuaries	10	1 223.0
National parks	9	1 653.2
Forestry reserves	2	940.2
Nature reserves	50	5 998.4
Protected areas	5	11 350.5
Sites of special natural beauty	26	6.6
Botanic gardens	5	0.4
Total	**107**	**21 172.3**

There are also plans for a 13 per cent increase in the national biodiversity register through an expansion in the areas and number of specially protected natural territories, through the sustainable use of species, populations and ecosystems and through measures to preserve them. Rare endemic and surviving species in need of preservation include more than 400 plant varieties and 300 types of vertebrates. In spite of the measures already taken, the proportion of birds, amphibians and mammals at risk of extinction is on the increase.

Forests

Forested areas in the Republic cover 26,770.5 hectares. Land under forest cover occupies 12,303.4 hectares, representing 46 per cent of the total forested area, or 4.6 per cent of the entire territory of the Republic.

Table 2
Basic indicators of forest land

Years	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*	*2008*
Total area of forest land, millions of hectares	26.1	26.2	26.5	26.5	26.8	27.8
Land under forest cover, millions of hectares	11.7	12.4	12.4	12.3	12.3	12.3
Total planted area of timber, millions of cubic metres	373.6	375.8	375.8	375.8	375.8	375.8
Percentage of national territory under forest	4.3	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5

Source: Summary statistical yearbook of Kazakhstan, 2007.

The average annual growth in the total area of forest is 0.5 per cent. The deforested area is considerably greater (42,400 hectares in 2006). There is a significant discrepancy between the extent of forest timber cut down and the

reforested areas. The situation is aggravated by the increasing number of forest fires.

Steps are being taken, in line with Government programmes, to stabilize the forest holdings of the Republic, as shown by the fact that the area of forest cover has altered only slightly over the past 10 years.

Land resources. The land area of Kazakhstan is 272.5 million hectares, 32.6 per cent of which is agricultural land. About 75 per cent of the national territory is at high risk of ecological destabilization (30 million hectares from sand and over 93 million hectares from excessive salinity). Rates of degradation are on the increase, with the dehumidification of soils on irrigated land (0.7 million hectares). Of 182.8 million hectares of pasture land, 26.6 million hectares are experiencing a high degree of desertification; and 169,700 hectares of land have undergone a change of use in the course of building works, the processing of extracted substances or geological exploration.

To slow down the pace of desertification, plans are being made to develop schemes of land management, including the regeneration of degraded soils and the restoration and improvement of irrigated land.

Water resources

Most of the country's major rivers rise outside its borders, making it dependent on the contiguous States. Kazakhstan's portion of these water resources amounts to 37,000 cubic metres per square kilometre, or 6,000 cubic metres per person per year; 95.2 per cent of the urban population and 57.2 per cent of the rural population have access to drinking water. By the end of 2010 it is planned to provide 77.2 per cent of the rural population with sustainable sources of drinking water of guaranteed quality and in the necessary amounts. Work is in progress to build and reconstruct water supply systems. The availability of fresh water (1,000 cubic metres per inhabitant) is significantly below international standards.

Table 3
Access to drinking water and sanitation as of 1 January 2007

	Numbers		*Access to drinking water*		*Access to plumbing*	
Population	*People*	*%*	*People*	*%*	*People*	*%*
In towns	7 867 170	51.5	7 485 683	95.2	5 050 022	64.2
In the countryside	7 396 739	48.5	4 234 258	57.2		
Total for the Republic	**15 263 909**	**100.0**	**11 719 941**	**76.8**		

Source: Documents from the Programme for achieving the MDGs for water and sanitation in the Republic of Kazakhstan to 2015.

As part of the measures to implement the Plan for developing the water sector of the economy to 2010, a system is being devised for making the transition to integral management of water resources on the reservoir principle, which reduces the strain on water ecosystems.

Greenhouse gases

The main sources of greenhouse gases in Kazakhstan are the energy sector, automobile transport and agriculture. In 2005 total emissions of gases with a direct greenhouse effect in the Republic were 240.7 million tonnes of carbon equivalent. Part of the emissions (5.9 million tonnes) were reabsorbed by forests and farmed land.[2]

Table 4
Emissions of gases with a direct greenhouse effect, millions of tons of $C0_2$ equivalent

Sources (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)	*1990*	*1992*	*1994*	*2000*	*2005*
Carbon dioxide	238.3	261.2	243.7	137.3	186.3
Hydrocarbons	64.0	57.8	46.3	33.9	42.7
Nitrogen oxide	27.0	25.1	17.6	9.0	11.7
Total emissions	**329.3**	**344.1**	**307.6**	**180.2**	**240.7**
Net emissions (sources minus absorption)	**321.2**	**336.9**	**302.7**	**173.1**	**234.8**

Source: Information bulletin on the state of the environment in the Republic of Kazakhstan, No. 1(87), 2007. Ministry of the Environment.

Consumption of ozone-depleting substances (ODS)

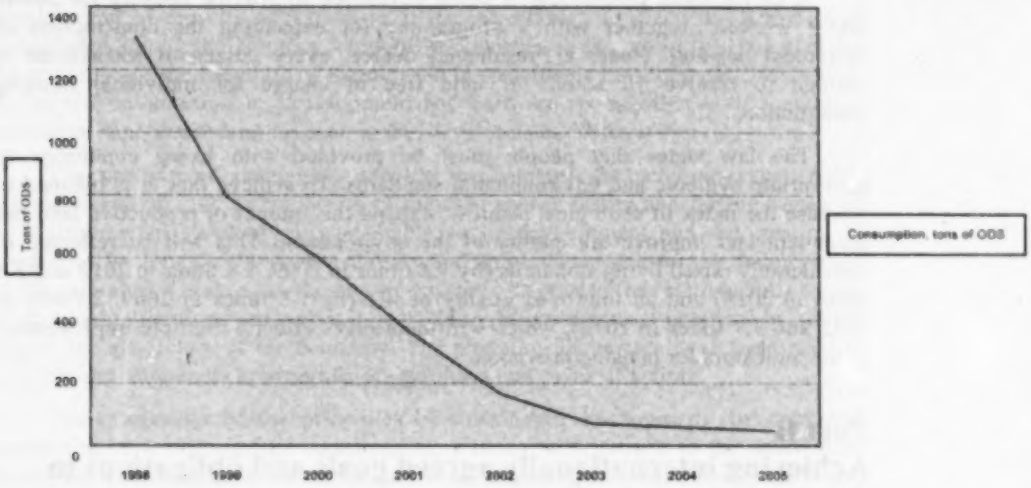
Kazakhstan is one of the 191 countries which have ratified the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Republic does not produce ozone-depleting substances, but it does import them in the form of refrigeration units, aerosols, fire extinguishers and construction foam. The ozone layer above Kazakhstan is diminishing in thickness in the winter and spring by 7 per cent, and in the autumn by 8 per cent.

To limit the use of ozone-depleting substances, a licensing system has been introduced for the import and export of ODS, with a ban on customs authorities allowing in certain controlled substances. New equipment has been installed in enterprises which previously used ODS in their technical processes. Recycling facilities have been provided for ODS. An information system on ODS has been introduced to process and analyse data on the volumes consumed, imported and exported. The rules for issuing permits for the import and export of ODS and products containing them have been tightened up, and also those governing production involving ODS and the repair, maintenance and servicing of equipment containing ODS.

As a result of the measures adopted, the volume of ODS consumption has fallen below one tenth of the previous figure (from 597,000 tons in 2000 to 46,000 tons in 2005).

[2] Information bulletin on the state of the environment in the Republic of Kazakhstan, No. 1(87), 2007. Ministry of the Environment.

Diagram 5
Trends in total consumption of ODS, tons



Improving living conditions

A key aim in Kazakhstan is to bring about a considerable improvement in living standards by 2020 for those among the rural population who are living in especially poor social, housing and environmental conditions. In the past 10 years there has been a significant increase in the average supply of housing. Homes in cities have been built at an especially rapid pace. The volume of investment in house construction in Kazakhstan in one year alone (2007) went up by 60 per cent.[3]

Table 5
Basic indicators of living standards

Years	*2002*	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*
Average housing supply in square metres of total living space per inhabitant, including:	16.6	17.0	17.3	17.5	17.6	17.9
Urban areas	17.3	18.0	18.4	18.7	18.9	19.4
Rural areas	15.6	15.8	15.9	16.0	15.9	16.2
Standard of housing stock by % of homes equipped with:						
A domestic water supply	52.4	52.8	53.5	54.4	54.9	56.3
Plumbing	43.1	43.3	43.7	44.6	54.0	45.6

Source: Summary statistical yearbook of Kazakhstan, 2007.

[3] Summary statistical yearbook of Kazakhstan, 2007.

The Republic has 20 centres for the social rehabilitation of persons without any fixed place of abode. New centres are being provided to help these persons to adapt and integrate to society, working to solve their housing problems through social tenancies and the provision of individual housing.[4]

A Government programme is being developed to provide housing for public sector workers, together with a programme for expanding the construction of individual housing. Under a Presidential decree, every citizen of Kazakhstan is entitled to receive 10 sotoks of land free of charge for individual housing construction.

The law states that people must be provided with living conditions to appropriate hygienic and environmental standards. To achieve this, it is planned to increase the index of ecological stability, expand the amount of productive land per inhabitant and improve the quality of the environment. This will be reflected in considerably raised living standards (by 1.4 times in 2009, 1.8 times in 2012 and 3.4 times in 2018) and an improved quality of life (by 1.5 times in 2009, 2 times in 2012 and 3.7 times in 2018), which will themselves effect a multiple improvement in the indicators for housing provision.

Part B
Achieving internationally agreed goals and obligations in the field of sustainable development

Supporting sustainability in national policymaking; introducing the principles of sustainable development into the economic, social and political spheres

The Republic of Kazakhstan, as a full member of the international community, has assumed obligations for achieving the targets set in Agenda 21 (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), the declarations of the Millennium Summit (New York, 2000), the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002) and the World Summit (New York, 2005).

Kazakhstan plays an active part in the work of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, the regional Eurasian network of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and the processes of "Environment for Europe" and "Environment and Sustainable Development for Asia". Programmes are successfully being implemented under the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFSAS) and the Caspian Environment Programme. The Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia is in Kazakhstan.

The Republic of Kazakhstan has ratified 24 conventions on conservation of natural resources. Under these conventions, Kazakhstan is cooperating with the Global Environment Fund, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and others.

[4] Report by Prime Minister K. Masimov "On the government programme for 2007-2009" at the joint session of Parliament, 2007.

The Government of Kazakhstan has adopted and is in course of implementing a number of key instruments: the development strategy for Kazakhstan to the year 2030; the strategic development plan for the Republic of Kazakhstan to 2010; the strategy for industrial innovation to the year 2015; the plan for ecological security in the Republic of Kazakhstan to the year 2015; the strategy for the sustainable development of the city of Astana to 2010; the strategy to place the Republic of Kazakhstan among the 50 most competitive countries in the world; and the plan for the transition of the Republic of Kazakhstan to sustainable development, 2007-2024. A Council on Sustainable Development has been set up, together with a national petroleum fund and a fund for sustainable development, "Kazin".

The programme documents include mechanisms for achieving sustainable economic growth; and principles of sustainable energy policy and for the transition to environmental standards of sustainable social development and the creation of conditions for long-term business activity and employment and for the development of the capital of Kazakhstan, the city of Astana. The country has introduced a model of economic growth which makes it possible to preserve natural potential by setting targets for all sectors of the economy. The planning documents have been used to develop and implement appropriate programmes and plans of action.

The integration of the principles of sustainable development (inter-sectoral partnership and inter-agency coordination, a balanced approach to the solution of economic, environmental and social problems, changing patterns of production and consumption) is coordinated by the Council on Sustainable Development, chaired by the Prime Minister of the Republic with the participation of representatives of State bodies, the scientific community, non-governmental organizations, business and international organizations.

The chief priority directions of policy in our country are the transition to sustainable development, improving the quality of life for the people and developing human capital. There are plans to reduce the level of environmental pollution, establish management systems for industrial and domestic waste, devise a mechanism for stimulating the rational use of natural resources, introduce a system of ecological management and international environmental standards at industrial plants, raise the index of ecological stability and sustainability to that of the 50 internationally competitive countries, solve the problems of sustainable water use and renewable energy, and involve leading business people in the process of sustainable development.

The country possesses all the resources needed to achieve sustainable development, in terms of natural resources and manpower, intellectual, industrial and financial strength, and so forth. In pursuing this aim, the Government of Kazakhstan intends to seek synergy through greater reliance on inter-sectoral partnership and inter-agency coordination.

Initiatives to achieve internationally agreed goals and obligations in the field of sustainable development

The following have been held in Kazakhstan:

– The International Ministerial Conference on "The strategic role of renewable energies in sustainable development in Central Asia" held under the auspices

of UNESCO and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IESCO) on 17-19 May 2006 in Almaty;

- The third ECO Ministerial Meeting on Environment, 28-30 June, Almaty;
- The international forum on the Balkhash-Alakol basin, March 2007, Almaty;
- An international business forum on sustainable development and corporate responsibility, 28 March 2007 in Astana;
- An international forum on fuel-saving technologies and alternative energy sources, 16 April 2007, Almaty;
- The first business forum on the problems of sustainable development;
- The third Presidential Council for Foreign Investors (2007), dealing with the problems of adhering to environmental standards in the business sphere;
- The first Eurasian forum on sustainable development (3 June 2008 in Astana).

At the Environment Ministers conference in Belgrade in 2007, Kazakhstan proposed the integration of the European and Asian programmes into a Eurasian programme for sustainable development, and the holding of a conference in Astana in 2011 for the 55 countries of Europe, Central America and CIS participating in the "Environment for Europe" process.

Risks and challenges

For MDG 1

- Fulfilling the goal for reducing the level of poverty may be made more difficult by the change in the approach to defining the subsistence minimum, by insufficient rates of income growth among the poorest members of the population and by the high level of inflation.
- Although some progress has been achieved in reducing poverty in the Republic, there is a risk that some of the population may be classed as poor because their incomes are insufficient for a decent standard of living. This means that certain problems must be tackled in the very near future in order to raise living standards for excluded groups in the population.
- Rates of rural poverty are still high, especially among mothers of families with numerous children and among young people. Given the high incidence of migration from rural regions to the towns, there is a risk of increased urban poverty.

For MDG 2

- The quality of education at all levels must be improved through the rational placement of educational facilities in the light of the demographic and migratory factors.
- A transition is needed to a new curriculum based on a skills approach, and new textbooks will be needed for the new syllabuses.
- State spending on education must be increased up to the level of developed countries (5-6 per cent of GDP), and this will make it possible to increase

teachers' salaries substantially and to improve the physical facilities in schools.

For MDG 7

– The lack of any estimate of value of the country's natural resource capital makes it necessary to undertake the tasks involved in establishing a register of natural resources, including technogenic resources (industrial and historic waste).

– The task of providing clean drinking water and improved sewage is complicated by the high proportion of the population (44 per cent) living in rural areas. To achieve the goals set, it will be necessary to continue with the policy of improving living standards in the countryside.

– Among the cardinal principles of sustainability is the ecosystem approach, calling for the introduction of a number of restrictions, rules and regulations in the conduct of economic activity, as a means of attaining ecologically permissible use thresholds for natural resources and ensuring the properly balanced management of environmental quality. A major problem is the failure to take sufficient account of the ecosystem approach when implementing development programmes.

Recommendations for achieving sustainable development

- Incorporate the principles and indicators of sustainable development into the processes of strategic planning of the development of the national economy;
- Improve the system for managing natural resource use and protecting the environment, overcoming inter-agency barriers and strengthening inter-sectoral partnership;
- Achieve synergy through interaction among the social, economic, ecological and institutional divisions of the public service sector;
- Establish transboundary sustainable development zones to solve regional environmental problems;
- Harmonize Kazakhstan's nature conservation laws with international norms and standards;
- Create a modern infrastructure based on the use of environmentally clean technologies;
- Support research into the preservation of the country's ecosystems and natural resource potential;
- Increase funding for the education system to ensure its sustainable development, up to the level of 5-6 per cent of GDP recommended by UNESCO;
- Implement measures to raise the quality of education while retaining its widely accessible character;
- Strengthen inter-agency coordination and inter-sectoral cooperation, and ensure that all inter-agency structures (commissions, councils, working groups,

etc.) include representatives of NGOs and of women's, farmers', trade union, youth, scientific and business organizations and associations;

- Strengthen international partnership, including with United Nations structures, so as to achieve sustainable development at the regional and global levels.

Partnership for development

Donor assistance began to flow into Kazakhstan following independence in 1992. At that time the country's economic and social structures were undergoing a major transformation, which in combination with the pressing need to carry out major economic reforms pushed the country's development into decline.

Limited resources in this period brought about the need for outside assistance in order to continue on the path of reform and effect the necessary structural changes.

The integration of Kazakhstan into the international community has provided the opportunity for obtaining concessionary loans and export credits and grants.

The official development assistance received by Kazakhstan during this period was mainly used to support the balance of payments and to finance the purchase of vital import goods.

Grants from international and foreign donor organizations, including the United Nations, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, USAID, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan were used to support national efforts in the field of legislative reform, to protect the environment, to reform the financial sector, for privatization and the restructuring of major enterprises, to develop private sector business and to support the social sector.

In order to stabilize the macroeconomic situation, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan has moved the emphasis of foreign assistance away from direct budget support and the creation of institutional potential, and towards the development of social and physical infrastructure and the mobilization of investment in the real economy.

There are presently 151 organizations in the Republic with international status, including 48 international organizations, 28 State organizations and 75 foreign non-governmental voluntary organizations and foundations.

Almost all the international development agencies and organizations, in one way or another, dispense grant monies to develop the sectors associated with the Millennium Development Goals. EU/TACIS and USAID contribute to some extent to developing and implementing projects in the field of social assistance, poverty reduction and boosting employment. Considerable assistance in achieving the MDGs comes from the specialized agencies of the United Nations in Kazakhstan (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIFEM and so forth).

Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, the Republic of Kazakhstan has come a long way on the path to sustainable development. The country has achieved some of the agreed development goals. The task now is to consolidate these achievements and take the solution of existing problems to a qualitatively new level, with more ambitious goals and targets within the current agenda for MDG-Plus. Specifically, MDG-Plus will be taken into account in developing the new

United Nations development assistance programme (UNDAF) for the period 2010 to 2015, which will determine the framework for cooperation between Kazakhstan and the United Nations. The Government of the Republic is weighing up the possibility of joint implementation of projects, including co-financing for the projects.

In strengthening cooperation with the United Nations, it will be necessary to pay greater attention to national priorities under current conditions. The framework programme, which is really a "road map", must become an effective instrument for greater interaction and cooperation in development matters between Kazakhstan and the United Nations.

In particular, when carrying out joint projects it will be necessary to pay special attention to the issues involved in reducing poverty and unemployment, maternal and child mortality, ensuring sustainable development, including improving the environment, combating HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, promoting gender equality and democratic governance, protecting the rights of excluded groups in the population, eliminating ecological impacts in the region of the Semipalatinsk site and the Aral sea, preventing risks on the Caspian sea and Lake Balkhash, and so forth.

The country's record of economic growth over the last few years has resulted in a significant reduction in volumes of official development assistance (ODA). Today, however, it is extremely important for the Government of the Republic to consolidate on the institutional level the achievements of the past few years in the area of development. In this respect, technical and consultancy assistance on the part of the international community, including the United Nations and its specialized agencies, in solving development problems is of great importance.

Annex

The Millennium Development Goals and the national goals and targets

MDG		*Kazakhstan*			
Goals	*Targets*	*Goals*	*Normative documents*	*Targets*	*Normative documents*
Goal 1: Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger	**Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than $1 a day**	Health, education and welfare for the people of Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan — 2030, Long-term priority 4	Reduce by 20-25% the proportion of the population with an income less than the subsistence level by 2005	Government programme (2002-2004)
		Ensure growth in real incomes of the people Introduce a system of social insurance	Kazakhstan — 2010, Strategy for ensuring employment and social protection	Over the period from 2002 to 2005, reduce by 30% the proportion of people with an income below the subsistence minimum	Project under the State poverty reduction programme (2003-2005)
		Find jobs for the socially excluded population groups		By 2005 reduce by 18% the proportion of people with an income below the subsistence minimum	
	Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger	Improve nutrition Improve the welfare of the rural population, raising productivity and the profitability of agrarian production	Kazakhstan — 2030, Long-term priority 4 Kazakhstan — 2010, Agro-industrial policy	Improving the health of children through rational high-quality nutrition Achieve food security for Kazakhstan High-quality rational nutrition for the population	State programme "The health of the people" (1998-2008) State agricultural production programme (2003-2005) Comprehensive programme "A healthy lifestyle" (1999-2010)
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education	**Ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling**	Achieve high-quality education at all levels Guarantee the constitutional right of citizens to a full secondary education, and	Kazakhstan — 2010, Strategy for reforming education State programme for education (2000-2005)	By 2010 all children of school age, including those in need of special education, must be receiving a quality secondary education	Development strategy for Kazakhstan to 2030 Long-term priority 4

MDG		*Kazakhstan*			
Goals	*Targets*	*Goals*	*Normative documents*	*Targets*	*Normative documents*
		improve its quality			
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability	**Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes, and reverse the loss of environmental resources**	Reduce the number of items of equipment which pollute the environment and cause ecological damage	Kazakhstan — 2030, Long-term priority 4		
	Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation	Water consumption and proper nutrition Improve environmental monitoring and the status of water sources Provide the people with quality drinking water	Kazakhstan — 2030, Long-term priority 4 Kazakhstan — 2010, Strategy for health reform National programme "Drinking water" (2002-2010)	By 2005 reduce the proportion of people without regular access to drinking water from 15% to 6% in towns and from 29% to 15% in rural areas	Project under the State poverty reduction programme (2003-2005)
	Have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers	Health, education and welfare for the citizens of Kazakhstan Improving the welfare of the rural population	Kazakhstan — 2030, Long-term priority 4 Kazakhstan — 2010, Agro-industrial policy	Solve the housing problems of a large number of people	Programme for the long-term funding of housing construction and the development of mortgage lending (2000-2003)

Source: United Nations development goals in Kazakhstan on the threshold of the new millennium, 2002.

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